[Medieval Georgia]

THE LIFE OF GEORGIA

Kazakh district of Georgia. No very ancient examples of Caucasian rug-weaving exist, but it is certain that the industry was developed from remote times. But here again, as Georgian architecture is part of East Christian architecture so is the Caucasian weaver's art an integral part of Islamic art —although the Christian weavers of Armenia, using what has come to be an essentially Islamic medium, have acquired no little renown.

Georgian and Armenian illumination, which achieved a certain degree of quality, cannot compare with the gorgeous workmanship of the Persians, and its technique is an adaptation of the Persian manner—including the aged animal style—and East Christian ecclesiastical formalism. The little that remains of Georgian fresco-painting and mosaic-work is crude copying from the Greek masters, but Georgian carving on wood and stone, although in the Byzantine tradition, is good work and has some originality. It is certainly the equal of the Armenian stone-carving which has attained some celebration in Europe.

In two spheres of art did the mediæval Georgians achieve not only quality equal to the best of Byzantium and Persia, but creative originality. In epic poetry, the Georgians far surpassed the Byzantines; and although comparison is difficult and invidious, it may be claimed that the masterpieces of Shota Rusthaveli and Sargis Tmogveli rival, if they do not surpass, the more celebrated works of their Persian contemporaries. And in the metallurgical arts—particularly in their own speciality, the metal icon—the Georgians produced creations which certainly equalled the products of the Islamic and Mediterranean cities of the time.

The churches of Georgia in their general design and structure may be divided into two principal types, which correspond in character to contemporary monuments through the Byzantine world and Armenia. The more ancient was the *centralized* type—the circular or quadrangular chapel, so constructed as to direct the gaze of the devout upward to the arched dome of the cupola, which with its sacred frescoes was to be identified with the vault of heaven. By the sixth century the majority of churches were being built in this style—which Strzygowski derives from the domed tent of the nomad Sacæ and the fashion of which he attributes to the influence of Iranian and Armenian ideas. The old Roman *basilica*, with its broad nave and impression of deep perspective, was passing. Justinian built his church on the Grave of Our Lord in Jerusalem in the new style. It was

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CHAPTER XXVIII

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GEORGIAN LITERATURE

THE literature of mediæval Georgia occupies a significant place in the history of Middle Eastern culture. It enfolds the divergent elements of two distinctive civilizations. The staleing intellectualism of Imperial Christianity was transformed by the Georgians into the simple and ingenuous fidelity of their Church literature. Here was a people to whom the Christian dialectics, already a thousand years old, were interesting and novel, and the monks of Georgia mingle with their translations of Holy Writ and their rehashings of Greek ecclesiastical polemics charming and childish personal biographies of the Fathers of the Georgian Church, whose adventures remain attractive reading, long after their theses and beliefs have turned to dust. At the same time Georgian lay literature—the great poetry of the twelfth century—sparkles with the vibrance of the Persian epics of the time. Nizami was writing in his house in Ganja, when, no more than a hundred miles away, Shota of Rusthavi first saw the light upon the tawny mountains of Samtzkhé. The coincidence has meaning. For if Rusthaveli has been compared to Tasso and Ariosto, if he was the creator, almost, of the Georgian language, and the interpreter of his nation, he was at the same time the pupil and the equal of the Classic Persian thinkers. The first and short-lived Renaissance of the twelfth century, which flowered and faded in the west, found expression in the east through the schools of Rusthaveli and Nizami. It was a brief stirring of the human spirit—a false dawn which faded quickly behind the sombre clouding of perpetual arms and of perpetual creeds.

> "No one knows my affairs like myself, what embitters me, what sweetens me. The discourse of idle men greatly grieves me. . . ."

wrote Rusthaveli in a world where thought was to remain, for yet five hundred years, a priestly perquisite. And he quoted Plato and lauded the wisdom of China and Persia, so that an archbishop in the eighteenth century was set upon

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burning all the manuscript copies of his work which remained in existence.

The early importance of Oriental influence in the development of intellectual life in Georgia is brought out in the study of the origin of the Georgian alphabet. The Georgians, in the Middle Ages, made use of two scripts, the cursive script called *mkhedruli* or "military" and the ecclesiastical script called *khutzuri*. Considerable controversy ranges round the origin and relative antiquity of these two scripts. According to the Georgian Annals, writing was introduced into Georgia, during the reign of King Farnavazi in the fourth century B.C. The Annals do not distinguish between the two scripts, but popular tradition holds that the *mkhedruli* was the older. On the other hand the ecclesiastical tradition, supported by Armenian writers, states that the *khutzuri* script was introduced in the fifth century by Mesrop, the inventor of the Armenian alphabet, and that it was founded on the Armenian.

Now, in the time of Farnavazi, systems of conveying ideas by making signs to represent phonetical sounds were not rare. All the peoples with whom the Georgians were in contact—Persians, Greeks, Syrians and Indians—were becoming accustomed to alphabetical systems of writing. And it seems likely that in introducing writing, Farnavazi would have followed the natural course of borrowing from the Persians, since not only were the Georgians in intimate contact with Persia, but Farnavazi himself was actually representative of Persian influence in the country. The Zend script was in the fourth century B.C. current in Persia; and a comparison of the Zend alphabet with the Georgian *mkhedruli* script makes it possible to recognize the equivalents among Georgian letters of no less than twenty-five out of thirty-five of the letters in the Zend alphabet. Some of the Zend letters have been incorporated into the Georgian alphabet without any real change in form; others, while retaining their shape, have changed their position from horizontal to perpendicular or reverse; others have been changed from right to left, which is explained by the fact that Zend was written from right to left, while Georgian, like the Roman scripts, is written from left to right. Lastly, other letters are recognizable with the addition or subtraction of lines. The resemblance between Zend and the Georgian *mkhedruli* script is, in fact, very strong.[1] And if the derivation of the Georgian

[1] Cf. Khakanov, *Ocherki po ist. gruz. slov.*, Vip. II, pp. 14 *et seq.* For comparisons of certain Georgian letters with Indian alphabets see Brosset, *Eléments de la langue Géorgienne*, pp. 6 *et seq.* The most recent researches, embodied in Prof. Javakhishvili's treatise on Georgian palæography, have not been available to me.

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GEORGIAN LITERATURE

The Georgian script is, like the Georgian language, ancient and original, and in its perfection to the use for which it is required, it bears the stamp of a venerable individuality.

The first two periods in the history of Georgian literature are that between the sixth and the tenth centuries, which is characterized by the production of works of a spiritual character,[1] translations of Holy Writ and other sacred writings, theses of the Fathers of the Church, edifying compositions and Lives of the Saints; and that between the tenth and twelfth centuries, which saw the development of chronology and history, and the composition of the Georgian epic poems.

Since the sixth century there had taken place a great literary development in the Georgian monasteries which grew up throughout the Byzantine Empire, in Sinai and Palestine and Syria, and on the Mountains of Athos and Olympus. Holy fathers were constantly passing from the hermitages of the just into their native Georgia—not infrequently with the object of raising funds from the devout Bagratid princes. Conversely, serious young men and jaded nobles (how many saints have risen from the beds of the dissipated!) were accustomed to go from Georgia to their national monasteries abroad. The two most remarkable men of this type, towards the latter end of the tenth century, were Tornikê,[2] a member of the Meskhian house of Chordvaneli, who was in the Byzantine service and who founded the Iberian monastery on Mount Athos out of the proceeds of a successful military career; and a certain nobleman Ioannê of Ardanuchi who abandoned the service of the Kuropalatês David of Tao to his master's indignation, and became a noted theologian and translator of Greek works into Georgian.

In the monasteries abroad whole families settled and the names of some have survived as copyists and calligraphers; in the ninth century there were the brothers, Zosimê, Ioannê and Kwirikê Sokhastreli on Mount Sinai; and in the eleventh century the numerous family of Dvali at the Monastery of the Holy Cross in Palestine.

On Mount Athos, the leaders of Georgian intellectual life pursued their studies; during the later part of the tenth century, Ioannê of Ardanuchi and his son, Evthimê; and in the eleventh century, Ephrem *Mtsirê* (the Little) and Saba Tukhareli,[3] and

[1] The earliest Georgian manuscripts, palimpsests discovered by Javakhishvili, date from sixth to seventh centuries.

[2] For an account of the important part played by Tornikê (or Tornigi) in contemporary Byzantine politics, see Schlumberger, *L'Epopée Byzantine*.

[3] Tukhareli—of Tukharisi in the Chorokhi country.

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772 Giorgi Mtatzmindeli ("of Holy Mount"), who, in addition to
● 338 his numerous writings, had no little influence on the relations of Byzantium and Georgia.

792 As so often happens in life, the incidental doings of these
177 holy men were far more important than their lives' works in copying and dogmatizing. The Georgian monasteries abroad became universities for the youth of Georgia, and in their travels they absorbed the knowledge of the Classic philosophers who had passing fashions in Byzantium, and they learnt the ways and the practical achievements of the great Mediterranean world. By contrary, the renown of the Georgian monasteries in the orthodox Byzantine Empire impressed the rulers of the West with the signal virtues of the Georgian nation, and the imposing theologians from Athos visited the capital as the diplomatic and, not infrequently, the matrimonial agents of the Georgian kings. Again, the returning studious youth, and the divines who came back to Georgia to forage among the wealthy and uneasy-minded, carried with them admiration for and desire to emulate the magnificent intellectual organization of the Byzantine Church. In Georgia the monastic system had been developing from early times. Grigol Khandzteli, in the ninth century, had founded a group of monasteries along the Chorokhi, and the excellent educational system which he introduced at Khandzti, Shatberdi and Tbeti was copied and encouraged by the Georgian kings, to the extent that in the eleventh century universities were in being at Gelati in Imereti, and at Alaverdi and Gremi in Kakheti.

538 The vast literary output of the monks, in Georgia and
776 abroad, is of little interest except to the specialist and to the student of illumination and book-making. It is only the "Lives" of Georgian Saints which have a certain historical interest and their own originality, in that the subject-matter is new. These "Lives" include those of Prince Murvano (St. Peter of Iberia); St. Nino, the Illuminator of Georgia; Saints Ioanné and Evthimé; St. Grigol Khandtzeli; St. Abo; and St. Giorgi Mtatzmindeli. Of these, the *Life of St. Abo*, who lived in the eighth century, is by far the most entertaining. St. Abo was originally a perfumer's boy in Baghdad. He met with Nersé, the son of Adarnasé Kuropalatès of Kartli, who was held prisoner in Baghdad, and accompanying the prince back to Georgia, was converted to the Christian faith. Later Nersé was involved in war with the Arabs, and accompanied by Abo, fled to Osseti and then into the land of the Khazars. After many adventures, they found their way to

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Abkhazeti and finally returned to Tiflis, where Nersé made his submission to the Arab Emir. Also lived for three years in peace, but the fact that he was a renegade from Islam finally came to the ears of the Emir, and a painful death removed the poor young perfumer to the calendar of Georgia's Saints.

The pursuit of historical studies was a minor interest of the Georgian monkish class, but with the patronage of the Georgian kings and of the lesser territorial magnates, the writing of chronicles and chronologies and the translation of Byzantine historical works became a favoured occupation.

Wakhtang VI of Kartli, an unfortunate king but an enthusiastic student, caused many of the early chronicles to be collated, and in the first decade of the eighteenth century this work of revision and completion of *Kartlis-Tzkhovreba*, or the *Life of Georgia*, was finally accomplished. *Kartlis-Tzkhovreba* is generally referred to as *The Georgian Annals* and is to be distinguished from the historical work of Wakhtangi's son, Wakhushti, which includes also local histories of the different Georgian principalities down to the middle of the eighteenth century. Again, the so-called *Armenian Chronicle* published by Brosset is a mediæval Armenian translation of a *Georgian Chronicle* which ends with the reign of David II.

The various existing manuscripts of King Wakhtangi's work which were made in the eighteenth century differ in certain details, and there is further an earlier manuscript of the seventeenth century, known as Queen Mary's, which indicates that attempts to co-ordinate the original sources of Georgian history had been made before King Wakhtangi's time.[1]

The earliest source of Georgian written history was a manuscript known as *The Conversion of the Georgians*, which was compiled in part by the disciples of St. Nino and in part at a latter date. A manuscript of the work attributed to the monk Mroveli, who lived at the end of the seventh or beginning of the eighth century, was known. To the ninth century belongs an *Anonymous Chronicle*, with a short *History of the Kings, Gods, Bishops and Catholicoses of Georgia*; and to the tenth century, *The Exaltation of the Living Cross of Mtzkheta* and an account of the *Conversion of the Somekhians* (Armenians). These works are essentially ecclesiastical. In the eighth century, however, Juansher Juansheriani wrote his *Narrative of the House of Wakhtang Gorgasali* (Gurgaslani), and the eleventh century saw *The Chronicles of Sumbat*, in which Sumbat Davitisdze

[1] For the sources of the *K-Tz.*, see the works of Th. Jordania, Javakhishvili, Taqaishvili, Kekelidze and Jqashvili.

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and Lies he showed that the light shrewd wisdom of the old Georgian epics was still a living thing.

In the eighteenth century, the Catholicos Anton I revived the studious traditions of the Church by a series of devotional and educational works; and King Irakli of Kartli, in the third quarter of the century, continued amidst wars and tumults, the enlightened literary patronage of Wakhtang VI.

Some reference has already been made to the great school of epic poets which flourished in Georgia between the tenth and the twelfth centuries. The famous names are associated with the reign of Queen Tamara, but the poetry of the Georgians had a long history before it flowered into the glories of the Tamaran epoch. The earliest of Georgian epics is that known as *The Wisdom of Balavari*. The tale is of a wise hermit, Balavari, who converted to Christianity an Indian prince, Iosapha, in spite of the angry persecutions of his father Aveniri. The tale of *The Wisdom of Balavari* or *Barlaam and Joseph* had widespread fame through Europe in the Middle Ages. Whether the Georgian version was the original, or only one among the many others, remains in doubt. The tale was first carried into Europe through a Latin translation from the Greek made by the monk George of Trebizond, and about 1230 Abbot Guido in turn rendered it into German. French, Italian, Swedish, Czech and Polish versions followed and finally it appeared in Iceland as the *Varlaams-saga*.

The story of *The Wisdom of Balavari* seems to be a monkish interpretation of the life of Buddha. Now Georgian knowledge of India was fairly extensive even at an early date, as a result of the service of Georgian contingents in the armies of the Sasanids. There are frequent references to India in the Georgian Annals and the mediæval poets show a considerable knowledge of Indian life. The tale was popular in Georgia from an early date, and it seems probable that it was originally carried into the country by Georgian monks from Jerusalem some time in the seventh century. There are indications that it was translated from Georgian into Greek by Saint Evthimé in the tenth century.[1] There were doubtless other popular epics in Georgia before the days of the great poets, and they would have been passed from mouth to mouth as is *The Man in the Panther's Skin* among the peasants to this day.[2]

The earliest of the epic poems of the twelfth century was

[1] For detailed discussion see Khakhanov, Vip. II, pp. 82–116.

[2] I have met officers, soldiers and peasants who can recite long pieces. It is in many cases their only and a sufficient literary education.

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538 the *Amiran-Darejaniani* of Moses Khoneli (from the village of Khoni in Imereti). The *Amiran-Darejaniani* is a collection of heroic tales centring round the legendary figure of Amiran, [177] and rich in the lore of the peasants. The poem contains many indications of Persian influence and it is imbued with much pre-Christian and pre-Muslim fantasy and tradition. It throws an interesting light on the state of geographical knowledge in Georgia, for it includes characters who come from the Yemen, Egypt, Astarabad, India, Basra, Bahrein, Ghazni, China and Khazaria.

The second of the great poems *Visraminiani* or *Visramiani* (the "Loves of Vis and Ramin") is based on an old Pehlevi tale which was current in contemporary Persia. Wardrop is of opinion that "it may have had a good deal to do with that development of European romanticism which finds utterance in the songs of the Minnesinger, the lays of the Troubadours, and the letters of Heloisa . . ." and he refers to the fact that "a comparison has been drawn between the Persian version and Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan and Isolt*".[1]

Visramiani, like *The Man in the Panther's Skin*, is a tale of fantastic romance, and it is full of the exaggerated metaphor and erotic sentimentality of the great Persian poems. Yet there is a gay and lilting strain throughout which carries the reader easily through the burdened passages. Throughout the poem there is a knowledge of human nature, a joy in the natural beauty of life, a brave and light yet sad philosophy, which is characteristic of all of the great Georgian poets, and which makes the reading of them at once pleasing to the taste and salutary to the spirit.

The poet gives descriptions, which are instinct with knowledge of his fellows:

> "Among these was a renowned, generous, wise-minded man, complete in manhood, fearless, prudent, cheerful, faultless in speech, brave and a seeker after wisdom, perfect in all virtues, exquisite; he was right cunning in leechcraft; a lover of all men, a man of God, and he was lord of a great land. Besides all these virtues he was a seeker after strange stories and poetry." [2]

And here is the account of a beautiful lady:

> "Now she has grown up with much self-will, and like a falcon's fledgling begins to soar upward. I fear that her flight will be so high that this nest will no longer content her and she will go away somewhere to seek her peers. Peerlessness and solitude go ill together.

[1] Wardrop, *Visramiani*, "Introduction," p. 7.
[2] I follow Sir O. Wardrop's excellent version.

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I have nurtured her most delicately, and now she is no longer pleased with our raiment, nor our meat and drink, although by God's help we lack not. Our power prevails not against her self-will; however matchless the robes I sew for her, she casts shame on sixty colours. If I give her yellow, she says this is garb for the sick; if I give her red she says that is for harlots; blue is the colour of mourners; white, quoth she, is for monk's gowns, and two-coloured for scribes. When she wakes in the morning, she commands her slaves and handmaidens and demands silk attire; at midday she demands a dress of gold brocade, and in the evening a dress of cloth of gold; every moment she demands another kind." 538

Shota (Ashot) Rusthaveli, the greatest of the Georgian poets, was a Meskhian, a native of Rusthavi, a small village between Akhaltzikhé and Khertvisi. According to tradition he received his early education from his uncle, a monk, and was later sent to the monastery of Tbeti. From there he went into Kakheti and spent some time in the monastic schools of Gremi and Iqalto. He then visited the Georgian monasteries on Athos and Olympus and, according to some writers, also travelled to Jerusalem. He achieved a fine familiarity with Greek poetry and philosophy and as is patent from his work, had some knowledge of Persian and Arabic. On his return to Georgia, he received an appointment in the royal treasury. In this position he no doubt gained the wide knowledge of the merchant-class which is apparent in his work. During the years at court he composed his famous poem, and popular tradition alleges that he concealed always a hopeless passion for the Queen. He received a fief on the Aragvi and appears to have attained considerable affluence. He died, according to tradition, in the same year as Queen Tamara.

The construction of Shota Rusthaveli's masterpiece *The Man in the Panther's Skin* shows strong Persian influence, and is, in Rusthaveli's words, "A Persian tale, now done into Georgian". The work is attractive in its philosophy of life, in its rich and vivid descriptions and its knowledge of character, rather than in its incidents, which are amazingly involved. As a document of the mediæval mind, it is a very precious thing. It is a mirror of the soul of the Georgian of the period, who dabbled in Greek philosophy, who was sporadically devout, and who rode in wild cavalry raids across all Northern Persia. It lights for us the cosmopolitan free-thinking mind of the Georgian noble, his easy, sentimental sensualism, his aggressive and gallant sense of his own unique superiority. We can see as vividly as though he rode past us on his "jet-black" charger, clad in "Khwarazmian armour", the mediæval Georgian

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● 538 paladin, a courageous slayer of the enemy, a daring huntsman, a respecter of the aged, a patron of the poor, chivalrous to women, a loyal friend and a great drinker, but withal, callous, passionate and cruel, ingenuously treacherous. Here is primitive man, with a gay fatalism, a light-hearted wisdom, a smattering of Greek learning, with a craving to assert his manhood in combat and to slake his passions in beauty and barbaric luxury.

Shahrukha or Shahrukhadze (the name is a Persian one) was the other of the great Georgian poets and he like Rusthaveli was a Meskhian. He has left a set of odes, some of which are very interesting, and one, an elegy of the knight-errant, has all the heroic and humanistic spirit of Rusthaveli's masterpiece.[1]

The Classic age of Georgian literature passed with the great Queen Tamara. But the Georgians have always been lovers of books and song, and the tradition was carried on during the troubled centuries by a number of indifferent rhymsters and imitators.

In the Renaissance of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the poets did not parallel the achievements of Wakhushti and Sulkhan Orbeliani in the sphere of historical and literary studies. For the lives of Taymuraz I and of Irakli II, there were two writers, Prince Archili and Guaramashvili, who voiced the deeds of these kings and the aspirations towards a national revival. But it was not until the nineteenth century that writers appeared whose creations in prose and verse could in any way bear comparison with the work of the twelfth-century poets.

[1] See Marr, *Drev. Gruz. Odopistzi*, in *Tek. Raz. A-G.*, IV.

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ont naturellement beaucoup d'esprit; l'on en feroit des gens 181
savants et des grands maîtres, si on les élevoit dans les sciences et dans les arts; mais l'éducation qu'on leur donne étant fort méchante, et n'ayant que de mauvais exemples, ils deviennent très ignorans et très vicieux. Ils sont fourbes, fripons, perfides, traîtres, ingrats, superbes. . . . Outre ces vices de l'esprit, ils ont ceux de la sensualité les plus sales, l'ivrognerie et la luxure. Ils se plongent d'autant plus avant dans ces saletés, qu'elles sont communes et nullement déshonnêtes en Géorgie. . . . Pour le reste, les Géorgiens ont de la civilité et de l'humanité, et de plus ils sont graves et modérés."

The life of the Georgian gentleman was passed entirely in 565
hunting, in war and in the satisfaction of personal feuds; from 224
the age of four years he was brought up to horsemanship and 262
the use of arms; every man was a past-master with the bow and lance. They hunted the jackal and the fox with hounds, but their favourite pastime was hawking, their principal game being cranes, herons and pheasants. After the chase the company would give themselves up to feasting and drinking. A main item of diet was *gom*, a kind of porridge made with millet, which formed almost the sole nourishment of the peasants, and was a much-appreciated course at the tables of the gentry. They had little fish except tunny and salt-fish imported from Trebizond and Kaffa, but ate many varieties of meat, the most abundant of which was pork, then venison, beef, mutton and hare.

At any great feast it was a point of honour to become in- 273
toxicated, and he who failed in this respect was considered to be a poor fellow. The lower classes, however, were often miserably fed, and the standard of their living was a very low one.

Georgian was a literary language, at least from the time of 212
Pharnavaz, who is said to have introduced the Georgian alphabet, derived, like the Armenian, through the Pahvli and Zend, from the Aramæan. The earliest extant examples of Georgian writing are copies of the Bible, lives of the Saints and other sacred works.

The Mongol and later Mussulman wars effectually checked 517
the natural development of Georgian intellectual life, and to 538
the separation from the philosophical and educational influences of Western Europe must be attributed much of the illiteracy, coarseness and lack of idealism of the Georgian aristocracy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. What little literary culture there was in the country was the preserve of

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517 the monasteries and, more particularly, of the small colonies of Italian Capuchin monks. With the beginning of the eighteenth century, however, a literary revival began, due partly to renewed facilities for communication with Western Europe. In 1712 King Vakhtang VI set up a printing-press in Tiflis and began the collection and publication of mediæval Georgian poems and romances, while under his direction *The Georgian Chronicle* was edited and published. Vakhtang in fact initiated a patriotic literary renaissance, which was a counterpart to the contemporary political reaction against the Mussulman overlords of Georgia.

538 It was however in poetry and in romanticism that the Georgian mind found its highest expression, and it is in the descriptions of colour, of nature, and of the emotions of the senses that Georgian writers have achieved the most beautiful passages in their language. The lyrical compositions of the great Georgian poets show us the best side of the national character—a love of the dance and of music and song and pleasant company, a delight in bright colours and rich stuffs, a kindliness for horses and wild creatures, an enthusiasm for fresh air and for the chase, an easy though sincere sentimentalism and a gay fatalistic philosophy of life—all are reflected in the literary masterpieces of the land. The most renowned of these mediæval romancers were Shaveli (all of whose works have been lost), Shakhrukhzade, Rustaveli, Khoneli, and Tmokveli. Of these Rustaveli is the best-remembered, and his masterpiece, *The Man in the Panther's Skin*, a lyrical romance of 1,600 quatrains, has survived complete.

Rustaveli died, according to legend, in the same year as Thamara[1]; with her passed the form, with him much of the spirit, of the Great Age of Georgia. But through all the dark centuries of the Mongol and Mussulman wars his poem survived. It lived as the expression of the national philosophy of the Georgians; it was repeated and quoted in camp and in the hour of battle; recited on many a shady balcony during the hot afternoons of seven hundred years; its vulgarised quatrains were bawled by drunken voices across many princely dining-boards; every young bride was required to know it by heart before her marriage; and to this day peasants may be heard singing broken snatches of it as they follow the plough or garner in the corn.

1 [i.e. Queen Thamara (d. 1212); see cat. 116, p 173 -- Analyst]

TRANSCAUCASIA

S.U. 563 648 [208] Ge. 186 648 [814] The Soviet Government remembered very conveniently,[1] that there were old Georgian national claims against Turkey which Bolshevism had persistently ignored during 27 years, but which could easily be revived to embarrass the Turks. Two Georgian professors, S. N. Dzhanashia and N. Berdzenishvili, started the job by publishing a long learned article in the Tiflis newspaper *Kommunisti* on December 14th, 1945. In this article, entitled 'Our Lawful Demands to Turkey', the two Georgian historians claimed for Georgia all territories which Georgia had lost from the Middle Ages onwards. They included, in particular, a coastline 170 miles long on the Turkish shores of the Black Sea.

The Georgian professors said 'We appeal to world public opinion concerning our ancient lands wrested from us by Turkey. This is not a matter of an insignificant territorial infringement, but of the seizure from us of the cradle of our individuality as a nation; of a crime which cut in two the living national body. . . . The Georgian people must get back their lands which they never gave up and cannot give up'.[28]

The world outside Georgia would never have learned of this re-birth of an outspoken Georgian national imperialism, had not the Moscow newspaper *Pravda* reprinted the entire article in Russian translation a few days later.

Ge. [538] What the historians had started was carried on by poets and playwrights. Thus Grigol Abashidze, co-author of the Georgian national anthem, wrote a collection of poems, *On the Southern Border*, in which he passionately advocated the reunion of the Georgian territories of Turkey with the Georgian motherland. North-Eastern Anatolia appears in Abashidze's poetry as the Georgian Province of 'Tao'. In one of his poems Abashidze promised that 'Tao' including the two ancient cultural centres of the Georgian people, Khandzta and Tbeti, would become Georgian again:

Ge. [539]

Tao, O Tao, our country thou,
Cradle thou of Georgian glory!

Ploughland of my forebears' furrows,
Brooded o'er by ancient towers,
How wast thou beset by sorrows
'Ere decay befell thy flowers!

Tao, O Tao, I hear thee, Tao,
Hear thy weary sighing dying.

Khandzta weeps and Tbeti murmurs;
Brothers' hearts there turn towards us.
One day Tao will join our numbers
'Neath the flag that proudly guards us.

[1] [i.e. in launching a "diplomatic offensive against Turkey after World War II - Analyst]

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For this and similar lyrical expressions of irredentism Abashidze was awarded a Stalin Prize for 1950. The same honour was bestowed on the Georgian playwright, Ilo Mosashvili, for the play *Sunken Stones*, which deals with the national aspirations of the Georgian inhabitants of an imaginary Turkish town not far from the borders of the U.S.S.R. The title of the play refers to the ruins of an ancient Georgian church, a national shrine of the local Georgians, which the Turkish authorities dismantle by night, throwing the débris into the sea. The play was shown in all the leading theatres of Georgia.

In the past the Soviet Government cared as little for Georgian as for Armenian national aspirations. In 1921 it had ceded to Turkey some of the territories which the Georgians have demanded since 1945. During the inter-war period any mention of the Georgian claims against Turkey would have been tantamount to high treason, since it would have disturbed Soviet-Turkish relations. Nevertheless, the Soviet régime showed an ambiguous attitude towards Turkey even in the period of the Bolshevik-Kemalist honeymoon. Almost from its inception the Georgian Soviet Republic included a small special territorial unit which, in itself, constituted a challenge to the Turks. This territorial unit is called Adzharistan or Adzhar A.S.S.R. It is situated in Georgia's south-western corner and covers but a tiny territory of 970 square miles. Adzharistan which consists of the port of Batum and its surroundings, was incorporated into Russia in 1878 after Turkey had held it since 1625. From a Georgian national point of view this conquest was of great significance, since it was the first of those vast formerly Georgian Black Sea territories which Russia succeeded in wresting from the Turks.

Though the population of these ancient Georgian territories, which reached as far as Trebizond, was forced to accept the Moslem religion, many continued to speak a Georgian dialect. Georgian nationalists, who called the lost Georgian lands 'Moslem Georgia', or 'Turkish Georgia', and their inhabitants 'Moslem Georgians', or Lazi, claimed that Russia, in her treaty with Irakli II, had pledged herself to strive for the reunion of Georgia with the lands which had belonged to her of old. The treaty did indeed contain a clause which might have been interpreted in such a way. Imperial Russia was in no way inclined to satisfy Georgian national demands. She was interested in Batum because it was an excellent sea-port and, later on, the terminus of the oil-pipeline running from Baku to the Black Sea, and not because Georgian nationalists cherished the idea of Batum's annexation.

The idea of annexing more Turkish Black Sea coastal territories by using Batum as a springboard for further conquests was not alien to Czarist policy. But this was *par excellence* a Russian imperialistic idea which totally disregarded any specific Georgian national interests. The development of Batum from a wretched little place with 1,500 inhabitants